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ENVIRONMENTALISM: A NEW SECULAR RELIGION?

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ABSTRACT

Nowadays our world is facing some important global problems; one of them is environmental one. The problem of the environment is one of today's most serious problem. In other words, we have faced with the widespread destruction of the environment. This problem threatens not only ourselves, but the whole world, and future generations and other organisms.

Against this threat, since the 1960s the development of ecological thinking and awareness has been raised. As a result of this development, environmentalism as an activist movement has become popular in the 1980's. This development has indeed gone hand in hand with the growing popularity of religions in West. Eastern ideas have been used to challenge Western ideas and values, and to spread throughout world. So environmentalism, as an alternative paradigm, is not much independent on religion. I argue that our understanding of environmentalism can be greatly enhanced by taking the idea seriously that environmentalism is a version of the modern secular religion. Because this issue is a complementary dimension of it.

In this context, this paper will try to study some questions. For examples, "What is nature, What is human and What is god?", "What is the relationship between god and nature?", "Is environmentalism a new secular religion?" "Can environmentalism replace the religion?", "Is religion compatible with environmentalism, and to what extent?" By the way of entry

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into the debate about modernity and secularity, I will focus on a sociological answer to these questions about nature.

This presentation examines the evolution of environmentalism from a movement to a religion. This paper will provide new perspectives for developing interdisciplinary approaches to nature, human, culture, and religion.

Keywords: Environmentalism, religion, secularization, secular religion

Introduction

Now, we have an ecological or environmental crisis. It is the most important challenge which humanity faced. In fact, the ecological crisis is a worldwide crisis or a crisis of entire civilization. In the globalization age, it takes on a special urgency and importance. The ecological crisis is defined as a crisis of modernity by some social scientists, and as a manifestation of the broader problems of modernity (e.g. Carter 2001:359). The environmental problems such as soil degradation, declining of biodiversity, solid waste problems, chemical pollution, global climate change, use of fossil fuels, population growth, the misuse of science and technology, consumerist capitalism etc., have deepened this crisis. The problem is human devastating of the natural world. In other words, it is a serious problem is that humanity devastates the natural world for earning much, resting much, being at easy life, living in comfortable life. In other words, this environmental crisis is a result of corporate greed, nationalistic aggression, obsessions with technological development, philosophical attitudes privileging man's reason above the natural world, addictive consumerism (Gottlieb 2006:5-6).

The ecological crisis has been central to human life for a half century, and it has still been continued. But, in this period, people everywhere are also coming to understand that they cannot continue to use the goods of the earth as they have in the past. So, a new ecological thinking and awareness has been raised since the 1960s, although those who adopt the Gaia hypothesis developed by James Lovelock, which it understands the earth as a tightly coupled system or a living, self-regulating, and adaptive superorganism; no single organism makes life on earth possible, and no organism, not even humans, can disturb the earth without severe consequences, as Gaia adapts to sustain the whole system (Dauvergne 2009:76), are more comfortable and indifferent to environmental problems. As a result of this awareness, in the

1980's environmentalism has become popular (Buttel 1987:475), with the effects of mass media, e.g. televisions, radios, newspapers, magazines, and especially websites. It is a common opinion that the destruction of huge sections of the world's ecosystems is a product of a cultural attitudes and beliefs about the relationship of humans to the non-human world (White 2004:9). Thus, the solution could also found by humans.

Appearance of the environmentalism and its development has indeed gone hand in hand with the wave of religious revivalism blew in whole globe. The environmental awareness has emerged at this time when the debate of de-secularization has continued. So environmentalism, as an alternative paradigm, is not much independent on religion. For this reason, like modernism, the environmentalism has become a meta-narrative or a utopia, because it has been perceived as "A Green Future", in which everything is in its proper place, for human-beings.

In other words, environmentalism as a movement of expressing conscious of the seriousness of this environmental threaten has aroused, and it has become to determine some norms about individual life, like religion (Clarke 1997:173). Nonetheless, Lynn White (1967:1204) was surely correct when he argued that: "More science and more technology are not going to get us out of the present ecologic crisis until we find a new religion, or rethink our old one." So, environmentalism is also criticized as a new secular religion. Looking at environmentalism from this perspective suggests new and useful lines of thought. The aim of this paper is to discuss the possibility of this idea that environmentalism could be like a religion, and to summarize the intense debate about whether the environmentalism is religion or not in sociological perspective.

In this context, this paper will try to study some questions. For examples, "What is nature, human and god?", "What is the relationship between god and nature?", "Is environmentalism a new secular religion?", "Is environmentalism and its relation to religion and religious ideas and motifs an attempt to legitimize in terms of consolidating and sustaining sensitivity toward the environment?", "Or is environmentalism a completely independent and secular religion?," "Can environmentalism take the place of religion?", "Is religion compatible with environmentalism, and to what extent?", "What stances do the different religions take against the challenge of environmentalism?", "Is a global coalition organized around core



values possible?” By the way of entry into the debate about modernity and secularity, I will focus on a sociological answer to these questions about nature. But, I have some causes for concern about whether the answers all could to be found or not.

1. The Views about Nature

Some of people propose economic and technological precautions for environmental problems. But the problem is not simply economic and technological; it is also moral and spiritual (see Bayraktar 1992:143-4). A more holistic and spiritual understanding of the global environmental problems has been aroused, because environmental problems have religious and philosophical background. And this background has evolved at various stages in modernization and secularization process. In the paper, I presented at an international conference about environment, I summarized views about nature by “the metaphor of tree” in three parts: a) Religious views (pre-modern period), b) secularist views (modern period), and c) recent views (post-modern period) (Kirman 2008).

In religious view, it was considered that the world was charged with the grandeur of God, and all creatures were given their purpose by their creator. In pre-modern age, God is the only primordial agent or actor in universe. In other words, a huge amount of credibility was given to the religious world view in everyday life and social interaction. But, in the modernization process, human beings witnessed the disenchantment of the world; the significance of religion as a socio-cultural category demised. As religion/god receded from co-extensiveness with nature, secular values of environment developed. The world loses its sacred character as man and nature become the object of rational-causal explanation and manipulation in which the supernatural plays no part (Kirman 2008). In this view, nature has nothing to do with the divine, and it could be examined and explained on its own terms. According to modernists, the universe was rationally constructed and it could therefore be understood through the right use of human reason and critical reflection (see McGrath 2003:182). Nature has rationally being planned and orchestrated by humans in modern times, while it was previously considered as sacred (Ivakhiv 2003: 11-29). It is not surprise that the environmental movement has aroused in postmodern period. Because in this period, Enlightenment rationalism has partly outdated and outmoded, and nature has reenchanting. According to some academicians and theologians, “To reenchant nature is to accept and cherish its divine origins and signification, not least in what it implies for our own nature and ultimate destiny ... To

reenchant nature is not merely to gain a new respect for its integrity and well-being; it is to throw open the doors to a deeper level of existence.” (McGrath 2003:185-6).

2. Environmentalism: Becoming Secular Religion

In modernization process, rapid social, cultural changes have experienced in all societies. The direction of this change has been from religious views to secular ones. In modern industrial societies, the mechanistic and rationalist view of the world have prevailed. This paradigm is focused on individual, not paying attention to the nature (Berry 1996). The positivistic thinking, as a component western philosophy, is anthropocentric, not nature-centric. Modern man has an “anthropocentric” conception that human is at the center of all things, and is the origin of all values, and that things only become valuable when they can be used by humans or when they become a product for human consumption. But in the beginning of 21st century this conception has come to change, “new ecological paradigm” which emphasizes a nature-centered understanding instead of human-centered nature has emerged as an alternative paradigm after the 1980s. New paradigm is ‘ecocentrism’ which it also referred to as biocentrism, because it is concerned with sustaining the whole of an ecosystem (White 2004: 9).

As a meta-narrative, modernity has offered a world without spirit by the developments in the fields of science and technology. But, one of the important consequences of modernity was the frustration or disillusionment with nature. Some environmentalists echoed a point as a resource of environmental crisis that the domination and exploitation of the natural environment leads to the domination and exploitation of humans. Because, in modern age, as Horkheimer and Adorno put it, “Men have become so utterly estranged from one another and from nature that all they know is what they need each other for and the harm they do to each other” (Barry 1999: 86).

All religions have faced a set of serious challenges by the widely effects of secularization process. Secularization eliminated both any special divine status of nature and any human responsibility toward it (McGrath 2003:110). In this process, the rejection of traditional religious beliefs and practices has created a vacuum. In this context, it is possible to say that environmentalism, like new religious movements and New Age, aroused as a result of effort which brings a spirit to this world. In this context, it is regarded as a searching of spirituality. The



environmentalism is progressively taking the social form of a religion and fulfilling some of the individual needs associated with religion (Garreau 2010:66). For some individuals, the role of religion seems increasingly to be filled by environmentalism. So, it has become as a religion. Ecology has become sacred, espousing by bodies such as the United Nations, the World Bank, multinationals and many quasi-scientific bodies such as the Worldwide Fund for Nature or the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (Cooper and Palmer 1998:28).

We have heard some interesting states as follows: “Environmentalism is a type of modern religion” (Nelson 2003:51), “Environmentalism, a Secular Faith” (Dunlap 2006), “The ecological movement is a global religion” or “Environmentalism as a worldwide secular religion” (Dyson 2008), “Environmentalism seems as a version of the modern secular religion of science and reason”, and “Environmentalism seems as a religion without God”. These are not a simply claim, but it depends on some observations. According to Nelson, many leading environmentalists or environmental activists have often characterized their own efforts in religious terms. They are talking as if they were secular prophets, and preaching a message of secular salvation. The environmental objective which they determined have a “frankly religious character” (Nelson 2003:51).

It is a controversial that environmentalism is literally a religion, but it is obvious that it has a quasi-religious character. Like dark green religion that considers nature to be sacred, imbued with intrinsic value, and worthy of reverent care, it has no institutions officially devoted to its promotion; no single sacred text that its devotees can read in hopes of reaping a future harvest of souls; no identified religious hierarchy or charismatic figure responsible for spreading the faith, ministering to the faithful, or practicing its rituals (Taylor 2010:ix).

The environmental movement has moved beyond affecting religions and has manifested itself as a religion. The ecological movement can increasingly be seen as something of a religion in and of itself. It is quasi-religious in character. It generates its own set of moral values (Garreau 2010:66). It seems a global, secular, civic, earth religion.

Another reason is that some scientists, particularly some having no belief in traditional theistic religion, included Stephen Jay Gould, Hans Bethe, Stephen Schneider, and Carl Sagan, rely on sacred metaphors to express their awe at the wonders of the universe and respect for life (Harper 2008:20). When the most of

today's famous environmentalists, like Carl Sagan, Edmund Wilson, Stephen Jay Gould, and Stephen Hawkins, have talked about nature or environmental problems, they have used the religious or spiritualist terms and motifs. In other words, often their language contains elements of their religious underpinnings, as evident, for instance, in the Gaiaist terminology. It contains both scientific materialist and various kinds of pantheist views.

All religions offer unique resources for the creation of an earth ethic. There are origins of environmental ethics in religious texts. All religions contain concepts that can lead to the enhancement of core human-earth relations. All creation were created by God, and we must keep the creation just as God keeps us. It is possible to say that all religions or religious texts have enormous potential for renewed appreciation of nature and environmental sustainability.

3. Ecotheologies and the Greening of Religions

When sensitivity to environmental problems began to be seen in all parts of societies, religious groups were also interested in this topic. Religions and their followers are/have closely related to environmental issues and problems. All religions have begun to approved the environmental ideas. For example, Christian theologians now speak routinely of "stewardship" –a doctrine of human responsibility for the natural world that unites interpretations of Biblical passages with contemporary teachings about nature (Garreau 2010:64). It is possible to see the same approach among the Muslim theologians. They tend to this discourse.

To affiliation religion with nature and to emerge environmentalism as a religion is in two ways: Firstly, various religious traditions accept environmental ideas and motifs. Secondly, environmentalism presents itself as a religion.

As religions and religious groups have become increasingly interested in environmentalism (Djupe and Gwiasda 2010: 73-86), it has become a religion in some way. Environmentalism emerged from the sensitivity of protecting the environment. But, today, environmentalism is more about protecting the environment.

Roman Catholics leader Pope John Paul II repeatedly addressed in passionate terms the moral obligation "to care for all of Creation" and argued that respect for life and for the dignity of the human person extends also to the rest of Creation, which is called to join man in praising God. Pope Benedict XVI has also



spoken about the environment, albeit less stirringly. He simply took for granted that his audience would recognize it as an object of legitimate Christian interest. What the matter-of-fact tone reveals, in other words, is the extent to which Catholicism has 'gone green' (Garreau 2010:64-5).

American Protestantism has also gone green. Numerous congregations are constructing "green churches". The concept of "greening of evangelicals" has been put forward to express evangelicals' sensitivity to nature and environmental problems. Many evangelicals follow environmentalism's agenda closely (Garreau 2010:64-5). They speak of their "broader environmental sensitivity" and "Creation care". For example, in the fall of 2004, the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE), an umbrella association of 53 evangelical Protestant denominations, produced a position statement advocating more resources to combat environmental degradation and promote environmental sustainability. The Evangelicals thought that they could influence decision-making processes and would be able to mobilize politics, even some people in Congress (Djupe and Gwiasda, 2010:73).

The concept of "greening of Muslims" was not produced and not used, in fact, green is also a symbol of Muslims. In this context, it can be said that the sensitivity to environmental problems is also very interesting in Turkey, one of the Muslim-majority countries. For example, the Presidency of the Religious Affairs (PRA) keeps the environmental problems and the environmental sensitivity alive in sermon and preaching, especially in the Friday Sermons. Additionally, some scientific events or meeting such as congresses, symposiums and panels on environmental issues were organized and sponsored by the PRA at the big hall of hotels or the universities. Especially most of these scientific activities were organized by the Faculties of Theology, and the lessons named "environment and religion" were taken part selectively in the curriculum. This support from religious organizations has moved the most of people because of the legitimization function of religion. Some religious communities in Turkey have interested in environment; the environmental programs were broadcasted in their private radio and television channels, as well as Turkish Radio and Television Corporation (TRT). In this case, it can be said that the interest of the religious groups in the environmental issues also has led to environmentalism becoming a religion by adding some religious motifs or elements.

In fact, for Gottlieb, religions does not demand neither environment domination nor ecological wisdom. In complex and

variable ways, they have been both (1996a: 9). But they always advise that the universe is created by God in an order, this order must be preserved and maintained. We must keep the creation just as God keeps us. But environmentalism, as a godless religion, argues that the universe has an order, this order must be preserved and maintained.

For fulfilling this vacuum, nowadays human beings seem to seek for order and meaning. Some of them syncretize some theologies, e.g. Jewish and Christian, with Eastern or New Age spiritualism (Garreau 2010:61). In this context, ‘ecothology’ has emerged as a form of constructive theology in 1970’s. It has begun to use as a new concept. It focuses on the interrelationships of religion and nature. In parts of northern Europe, especially in Scandinavian countries, ecotheology as a new faith is now the mainstream. In this region, especially in Denmark and Sweden most people live a secular life, but these places have become “clean and green” (Zuckerman 2008:2). This new faith has very concrete policy implications; the countries where it has the most purchase tend also to have instituted policies that climate activists endorse. To better understand the future of climate policy, we must understand where “ecothology” has come from and where it is likely to lead (Garreau 2010:62). Ecotheologies loosely based on concepts lifted from Hinduism or Buddhism have become popular in some Baby Boomer circles. Neo-pagans cheerfully accept the “tree-hugger” designation and say they were born “green.”

On the other hand, a journal called as ‘Ecotheology: Journal of Religion, Nature & the Environment’ was published by Equinox Publishing, indexed since 1997, and it ceased with the completion of Volume 11.

4. Discussion

It would be useful to make a comparison between religion and environmentalism to understand whether environmentalism is a religion. Now, if we have pointed out environmentalism’s religious foundations, some fundamental arguments as below:

4.1. Modern and Secular Culture

The important reason is secularist views about nature. In modern times, religion has lost its importance and values have degenerated, and erosion of values has experienced. Another



reason is consumerist capitalism. It can be said that contemporary consumerist capitalism has played a central role in environmental destruction. The social and cultural formation of contemporary consumerist capitalism has a quasi-religious dynamism all of its own (Greider 1997; Loy 1997) that has played a central role in environmental destruction. It is known that quasi-religions, like new religious movements and new age, has emerged along with the loss of religion during the secularization process.

In advanced modern and secular western societies, a great alternative for those living in secular culture is to join non-religious activist groups. Environmentalism is an activist movement, especially political one. It is based in groups of people that come together because of shared ideals, by thinking there's a lot more to life than worship. In these days we live in a modern and consumer society in which people looked for something beyond more comfortable life, more consumer goods and a larger income. In this context, religion is insufficient properly to satisfy their material needs, because it could not been reinterpreted according to conditions of contemporary society, and it lost its social significant. But, environmentalism used a new perspective, and offered new ways for these needs in terms familiar to the secular culture. Thus, it appeals much people who could not accept any religious tradition or beliefs, by offered similar conventional religious heaven. In other words, it addressed human needs secular culture neglected.

We cannot believe in God, but we still have to believe in something that gives meaning to our life, and shapes our sense of the world. Such a belief is religious. For Crichton, environmentalism has become "the religion of choice for urban atheists."

4.2. System of symbols of beliefs

The religion is a system of symbols, providing a set of beliefs and ritual practices for maintaining contact between this world and a system of transcendent meaning and experience (Hanegraaf 1999). All religions have some credo, beliefs and doctrines that must be believed, and required obedience. In the same way, environmentalism has also its own beliefs. Environmentalism lines up pretty readily with religion and religious symbols. As climate change literally transforms the heavens above us, faith-based environmentalism increasingly sports saints, sins, prophets, predictions, heretics, demons, sacraments, and rituals.

The essential characteristics of religions include a distinction between sacred and profane objects; ritual acts focused upon sacred objects; a moral code; feelings of awe, mystery, and guilt; adoration in the presence of sacred objects and during rituals; a worldview that includes a notion of where the individual fits; and a cohesive social group of the likeminded (Garreau 2010:67).

As Michael Crichton (2003) said without exaggeration: “There’s an initial Eden, a paradise, a state of grace and unity with nature, there’s a fall from grace into a state of pollution as a result of eating from the tree of knowledge, and as a result of our actions there is a judgment day coming for us all.”

According to Freeman Dyson (2008), this religion holds “that we are stewards of the earth, that despoiling the planet with waste products of our luxurious living is a sin, and that the path of righteousness is to live as frugally as possible.”

The tenets of environmentalism are all about belief. “It’s about whether you are going to be a sinner, or saved. Whether you are going to be one of the people on the side of salvation, or on the side of doom. Whether you are going to be one of us, or one of them.” (Garreau 2010:68).

There are some similarities between them. Firstly, a number of common points have emerged among religious people and environmentalists. For example, while religious fundamentalists worry about the genetic manipulation of the human body (cloning, stem cells, etc.), environmental fundamentalists are concerned with the genetic manipulation of the natural world (genetically modified crops, etc.). In fact, both of them are concerned with that modern science may be going too far (Nelson 2003:53), that the relationship between human and nature will be disturbed, and that human beings will be alienated to himself and to nature.

Environmentalism, like religion, is not a homogenous movement, because it is a large and diverse one. In other words, there are many varieties of environmental religion (Nelson 2003:53), just as there are many sects or religious communities with having different religious interpretations such as traditional, modern, and moderate ones.

Environmentalism is a movement seeking salvation for the earth’s ecosystems. Within the context of this particular logic, the protection of the environment is understood as essential to human survival. Like religion, environmentalism attaches importance to conservation and regulation.



All religions prohibit all kinds of pollution and environmental destruction, especially moral pollution. Environmentalism, like a religion, also opposes all kind of pollution, but it does not interest ethical degeneration or corruption. Because it has a secular characteristics. There is a difference between them; while religions do this in the name of God, environmentalism claims that they must be made for man. When religion says that the punishment of destroying nature as a trust of God, is in the hereafter, environmentalism says that the punishment of this will be seen in this world, and that the world will turn into hell. According to the environmentalism, like religions, it is a necessary that this earth must be preserved and kept clean, livable world without pollution. Because, this earth is not just for people but for all living things. People do not have the right to destroy the earth and selfishly use it for their own use and to harm to other living things. In other words, people should take advantage of the environment without any damage, and make it livable and beautiful. As Crichton (2003) said: “We are all energy sinners, doomed to die, unless we seek salvation, which is now called sustainability. Sustainability is salvation in the church of the environment. Just as organic food is its communion, that pesticide-free wafer that the right people with the right beliefs, imbibe.”

Religions have strong, comprehensive and long-lasting moods and motivations for people, by formulating concepts of a general existence order. In other words, religions provide norms of conduct for the familiar interpersonal settings of family, community, and world. Religious moral teachings presuppose a spiritual foundation and are meant to root our everyday behavior in a spiritual truth about who we really are. Environmentalism used some ideas, e.g. to heal nature or our alienation from nature and to restore harmony between humans and nature, to point toward a new life style, even a new society.

4.3. Religions have gods God and godless

Almost every religious traditions have gods and goddess or saints. Religious people are essentially connected to a God as Supreme Being. Although environmentalism seems as a version of the modern secular religion, the godless religion, the academicians and specialists which include environmental engineers, geologists, and dietitians, speaking about nature, environment, ecology, and global warming looks prophets of environmentalism, even if they are not God. Environmentalism has easily recognized saints such as Henry David Thoreau, John

Muir, Aldo Leopold, Rachel Carson, and many others (Taylor 2010: x). Most environmentalists think of “the environment” as a real “thing” to be protected and defended, and think of themselves, literally, as representatives and defenders of this thing (Shellenberger and Nordhaus 2004:12). They have set rules or norms about nature, environment, and ecology. In a sense they become prophets or gods.

4.4. Ethical Norms

For Dyson (2008), the ethics of this new religion are being taught to children in kindergartens, schools, and colleges all over the world. For example, ruthless destruction of natural habitats is evil and careful preservation of birds and butterflies is good.

As we know, all religions have some norms to regulate all sphere of human life. Like religions, environmentalism “aspires to be a practical ethic controlling and shaping human behaviour towards the natural environment” (Cooper and Palmer 1998:28) in all spheres of life either public or private, for example eating, drinking, sleeping, shopping etc. Even the environmental sensuality/awareness has also expanded and entered the ‘bedroom’ as private sphere. With an article entitled “How can you make your sexual life green?”, “TreeHugger”, an online Canadian magazine, has also published some proposals supported by the international environmental organization Greenpeace. The slogan is “Think the earth and make green sex” (March 2007). Here are the suggestions in a list prepared as a “green sex” guide, which they are also known as the rules of environmental sexuality:

- a) To use bed sheets made from bamboo
- c) Not to buy materials made by PVC or vinyl from “Sex shops”
- d) To buy an “Eco-Sexy Kit” featuring a phthalate-free vibrator, soy massage candle, a natural lubricant with no animal-testing or derivatives, and condoms.
- e) To use organic massage oil
- f) To turn off all lamps in bedroom
- g) To wear lingerie or underwear made with fibers came from renewable resources.
- h) To shower together / To take a shower with partner

4.5. Rituals



Religions provide rituals —acts of prayer, meditation, collective contrition, or celebration— to awaken and reinforce a personal and communal sense of our connections to the Ultimate Truth(s). When environmentalists were looking for a concrete campaign, in fact they almost want to design a ritual. In other words, a campaign organized to create environmental awareness is in fact a kind of ritual.

In Turkey, environmental awareness has spread so much that legislative proposals were made in the Grand National Assembly of Turkey (TBMM), which the Article 169 of the Constitution concerning “protection and development of forests” was regulated as “afforestation is national duty” for those who are engaged in military service, prisoners in prison, new married couples, and parents of a new-born child. Some municipalities require a certificate obtained for planting tree from new married couples, and the contractors for construction permits planting tree. As a result of this, by large and magnificent ceremonies with large participatory, “memorial forests” (*hatıra ormanı*) were created by the environmental NGOs such as TEMA and so on. Like a pattern of civil religion, these ceremonies were not very different from religious ceremonies, because they looked very much like religious ceremonies and rituals.

As we mentioned above, environmentalism has called on religion. But, we can ask here the question, as Michael Crichton said in his widely quoted 2003 speech, “Can Environmentalism take the place of religion?” It is very important question for understanding the relationship between religion and environment, and the future of environmentalism. So, we must calmly answer it.

The religion’s reverence for nature was appealing to those concerned with ecological issues. For a generation that questioned authority, the religion offered a spiritual path that was nonauthoritarian and encouraged self-development through ritual and magical practices (Berger 1998:219). Like religion, environmentalism used some religious ideas and motifs. Thus it appeals much people who could not accept any religious tradition or beliefs, by offered similar conventional religious heaven, because it addresses human needs neglected by secular culture. It grounds its actions in an answer to more fundamental questions about what nature is, what humans are and what place they have in the world, in t, in an answer to the classical questions of religion, and so any adequate view of environmentalism must be recognized as a religious movement. But the environmentalism looks to scientific ideas rather than a revelation from on high.

Interestingly, some people had talked about “death of environmentalism”, with all of its unexamined assumptions, outdated concepts and exhausted strategies (Shellenberger and Nordhaus 2004:10). But it is not fair to say that it has dead or will die. As population growth continues, as food and energy needs increase due to population growth, and even as energy demand grows more rapidly in population growth, and as fossil fuel alternatives are not produced, the environmental degradation will continue to increase. Parallel to this, the environmentalism will be alive as a sense of environmental conscious, awareness or sensitivity. Thus, some analysts or specialists have described it as a religion. But, describing environmentalism as a religion is not equivalent to saying that it is an established religion; it will remain a spiritual form, a set of symbols and beliefs that provide that individual with rituals to maintain contact between this world and a system of transcendent meaning and experience (Hanegraaf 1999; White 2004:22). So, it has deprived religious or spiritual motifs. In other words, it has no power of religious legitimization, while religions has a powerful instruments of legitimization. It seems the close relationship between religion and environmentalism and their cooperation will continue, because there is a close relationship among nature and God.

5. Conclusion

The problem of the environment is one of today’s most serious problems. In other words, we have faced with the widespread destruction of the environment. This problem threatens not only us as humans, but the whole world, and future generations and other organisms (Kirman 2008:268). With the widespread destruction of the environment and the current worldwide ecological crisis during the past half century, a new ecological awareness is beginning to emerge. In this period, people everywhere are coming to understand that they cannot continue to use the goods of the earth as we have in the past. So, environmentalism

Global warming, drought, the increase in the number of natural disasters, the decrease in water resources and animal and plant species, the increase in the amount of garbage and waste can be counted as problems caused by contamination in the atmosphere by the accumulation of greenhouse gases. Human greed, extravagance, passion of earn and passion of exploit, insanity of consume lied behind the all these eco-systemic violations. In modern societies defining with a secular character,



as a normative system religion has become ineffective to prevent to such these feelings and habits. In other words, in modernization process, the rejection of traditional religious beliefs and practices has created a vacuum. In this context, some people have expected environmentalism fill in this vacuum. This expectation has carried it to a position of new secular religion. Although it is progressively taking the social form of a religion and fulfilling some of the individual needs associated with religion, describing environmentalism as a religion is not equivalent to saying that it is an established religion.

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